

NSC BRIEFING

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30 JANUARY 1956

ALGERIAN CRISIS

- I. Algerian rebels' "insurrectionary general strike", planned to coincide with UN debate on Algeria, is now three days old and appears to be weakening.
 - A. On strike's first day, Moslem, work-stoppage was 90% effective in city of Algiers and in east and central Algeria, but much less so in west. By third day, press reports state that many workers were returning to their jobs--often under French "requisition" orders.
 - B. Few terrorist incidents thusfar: none at all in city of Algiers.
 1. Also, no organized rebel military activity to date (last reported armed clash was on Saturday).
 - C. Among the 500,000 Algerian workers in Metropolitan France, 60 to 70% in Paris area answered first day's strike call, but response in provinces was less.
 - D. Strike was originally to last 8 days: may now be extended for duration of UN debate scheduled to start next Monday.
- II. Strike has come at time when European-Moslem tension in Algeria is at all-time high. Acts of violence by rebels themselves, by 1.2 million indignant "colons", or by 400,000 French military in Algeria could easily touch off major explosion.
 - A. Just before strike, one French general told our consul in Algiers he expected rebels could step up terrorist killings in course of strike, with hope of provoking colons into bloody retaliation.

DOCUMENT NO. 24
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. 1
DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: FOUO
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1998
DATE: 1-16-80

25X1

01998



State Dept. review completed

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1. General foresaw situation "similar to Budapest," with thousands of Moslems killed.
 - B. General also foresaw attempts by rebel military groups along Moroccan and Tunisian borders to capture border towns of Tlemcen (in west) and Tebessa (in east).
 1. Earlier, a rebel spokesman in Libya had stated that strong rebel military offensive would be timed with strike.
 - C. Thus far, these forecasts have not been substantiated.
- III. Probably most explosive element in present tense situation is though attitude of colons.
- A. Liberal settlers who favor accommodation with rebels--such as mayor of Algiers--are minority.
 - B. Vast majority of colons view suppression of rebels as fight for own lives, are increasingly fearful that Paris is ready to compromise.
 1. These colon die-hards have established own counter-terrorist HQ, formed quasi-military reprisal units.
- IV. Attitude of Army, in event of Colon-Moslem showdowns, is another imponderable. Paris admits widespread sympathy for colons among junior officers and non-coms, and open Army criticism of Paris policies has been heard.
- A. In December, three French generals in Algeria had to be "disciplined" by Paris for flirting with colons in alleged plot to overthrow metropolitan control, establish "white republics."

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1. Doubtful if such contacts will produce results, at least until after UN debate.
2. However, Mayor of Algiers believes rebels are likely to accept Mollet's cease-fire bid, provided French do not "lose face" in UN.

VII. As to UN airing, French apparently hope to limit UN action to an innocuous procedural motion.

- A. Pineau will present French case: deny competence of UN to consider "internal" matter, attack "foreign" (particularly Egyptian, Soviet) influence behind revolt.
- B. If Assembly nonetheless asserts competence, French delegation will walk out, boycott further discussion.
- C. Should hoped-for procedural loophole be plugged and UN officially condemn French role in Algeria, France may well withdraw altogether from UN membership.

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